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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 000567

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DEPARTMENT FOR H

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SUBJECT: SHALOM CALLS A STRONG HAMAS SHOWING A WIN FOR
EXTREMISM IN TALKS WITH SENATOR OBAMA

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Gene A. Cretz. Reason 1.4 (B/D)

1. (C) Summary: During discussions January 10 with Senator Barack Obama, then FM Silvan Shalom said he predicted that Hamas would win a significant number of votes in the January 25 Palestinian Legislative Council elections. He said that a strong showing by Hamas will show moderate Palestinians that they should be more extreme. Shalom said that polls show that Kadima is attracting as much support as it did with PM Sharon running, which means that Likud defectors will stay put and Kadima will hold together. Shalom warned that Iran will never abandon its dream of developing a nuclear bomb and only UNSC sanctions and a united international community will get Iran to give up nuclear weapons development. End Summary.

Hamas and January 25 Elections

2. (C) Senator Barack Obama met January 10 with FM Silvan Shalom (who resigned from the government on January 13) to discuss foreign and domestic political developments. Shalom said then that it looked like Hamas would win a significant number of votes in the January 25 Palestinian Legislative Council elections, a result that he said will show moderate Palestinians that they should be more extreme. He said that Israel wants to strengthen the moderate Palestinians. Shalom said that the Palestinian Authority is shocked by the results of the recent municipal elections where Hamas obtained double the votes that Fatah received. Shalom offered that it is easy to win support in the Palestinian community, if an organization promises that it will sooner or later take over the entire state of Israel. He noted that the Hamas charter says that Israel belongs to all Muslims, making it impossible for any political leader to compromise. Shalom offered that Hamas had garnered support because it provided social services, but noted that it has been doing less since being designated a Foreign Terrorist Organization and the international community has worked to stem the flow of funds to the organization.

3. (C) Shalom said that Hamas participation violates the agreement on elections, which clearly states that organizations calling for the destruction of Israel cannot participate. He said that Israel had expected that all countries would support the GOI position and that the U.S. and EU would tell President Abbas not to allow Hamas to participate. He said that Israel is concerned about Hamas participation, and everyone else should be as well. Shalom claimed, however, that some Europeans are meeting with Hamas candidates because they could become parliamentarians. He wondered whether the Europeans would now also abandon sanctions against Hamas.

Kadima Still Strong

4. (C) Shalom said that polls show that Kadima will get the same support in the upcoming election as it would have with PM Sharon still party leader. This means, he said, that Likud defectors will not return to the fold, because they believe that they have the best chance at getting elected running on the Kadima list. He said that the question for Kadima is not who will lead the party, but who will be number two, three, etc. Shalom claimed that many voters, including many Russian-speakers, had been going to cast their vote because they wanted to support Sharon. He was not sure they would do that for Acting PM Olmert.

Iran

5. (C) Shalom said that Iran will never abandon its dream of owning a nuclear weapon. He said that the Iranians are playing games and not adhering to the Paris Protocol. Shalom said that Iran will bring an arms race to the region because once it has the bomb, Turkey and the Gulf States will want them as well. He claimed the Europeans acted only when it became clear that the Iranians were developing longer-range weapons. He said a Russian deputy foreign minister and the head of Russia's Atomic Energy Agency visited Tehran recently

because the Russians now realize that Iran could hit them as well.

16. (C) Shalom said that UNSC sanctions would be sufficient to get the Iranians to back down. The key is for the international community to work together, he said. If sanctions are not enough, Shalom said, the whole international community can decide together on next steps and take action. Shalom said that the Iranian president is crazy, but the international community is tired of condemning him for a statement every week.

17. (U) Senator Obama's staff cleared this message February 6.

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JONES